

A History **BRYAN PARKS AND RECREATION** *1868 - 2004*

DEDICATION

This chronology will not only carry you on a journey in history with the Bryan Parks and Recreation Department, but will encircle eras of recreation in the City of Bryan that have seen many dedicated men and women entrust many hours to the fulfillment of enriching programs and facilities for the citizens and visitors of Bryan.

As you read the history of our parks from the past to the present put yourself on that park bench, swing, or playground and remember your heritage, and well as the pleasure you and your family enjoy.

BACKGROUND

The townsite of Bryan, which originally totaled 640 acres, was sold by William Joel Bryan to the agents of the Houston and Texas Railroad for \$3,200 in April 1860. Bryan was fortunate to be the center of a rich agricultural region. The Houston and Texas Central and later the International and Great Northern Railroads gave the town access to markets. Its other great advantage is that Bryan lies on a plateau between two rich river valleys, the Brazos to the west and the Navasota to the east. These factors all contributed to the prosperity of Brazos County citizens. This prosperity gained from agriculture later developed into industrial investments which led to more leisure time for the citizens of Bryan.

Most of the acquisition of park land followed this pattern as the City expanded: pasture land, then development of homes, and then the necessity for park land. Remember, people in Bryan engaged in all types of outdoor sports, such as hunting, fishing, trapping, and even horse racing. Horses were still the primary method of travel. Even bicycles were somewhat of a novelty in Bryan in the 1890's.

It was not until the 1920's that city planners in Bryan began considering organized recreational needs for Bryan's citizens. This was a consequence of the adoption of a new charter in 1917. This charter formed a city manager-commission form of government. A city manager-commission better organizes a division of labor and task specialization in city departments. This idea would become important later in the creation of a separate Parks and Recreation Department staffed by personnel whose specialty was recreation and parks. The State of Texas had passed legislation permitting the municipalities to set up and operate broad recreation programs. Bryan city planners were part of this larger impetus and sought an area for recreation in Bryan in the 1920's, i.e. 9.5 acres for Sue Haswell Park.

GET TO KNOW US

The Bryan Parks and Recreation Department as it is known today was founded in 1956. Governed by the Bryan Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, the department currently maintains nearly 750 acres of parkland. The nine-member Advisory Board is comprised of City Council appointed citizens who serve two-year terms.

In 2004, approximately 43 park properties offer a wide variety of year-round recreational opportunities including playgrounds, parkways, golf course, picnic areas, walking trails, sport complexes, a handicap exercise facility, camping, swimming and boating. Bryan's first recreation center is located adjacent to the Neal Elementary School campus and opened in August 1998.

The Bryan park system operates additional facilities including neighborhood pools, the Bryan Aquatic Center with a giant waterslide, covered and lighted tennis and basketball facilities, as well as two in-line hockey rinks and a skateboard park.

The Bryan Parks and Recreation Department seeks to provide a variety of leisure opportunities for its citizens and visitors. It also strives to add to the quality of life that makes Bryan a special place in which to live and work.

The department serves a varied public: urban and rural; multiple ethnic and racial groups; citizens with widely divergent income levels and standards of living; and an array of recreational and aesthetic special interests.

Bryan Parks and Recreation offers numerous recreational opportunities throughout the year at its facilities. Among them are recreational sports leagues that include softball during the spring, summer and fall, volleyball, basketball, in-line hockey, and horseshoes. Softball tournaments at the local, regional, state and national levels are also held during the year at the state of the art Larry Parker Softball Fields at the Bryan Regional Athletic Complex. Bryan's special events offer entertaining and enriching opportunities for people of all ages. Activities include recreation, sports, drama, arts and entertainment.

The Bryan Parks and Recreation Department is service oriented and guided by a fee policy recommended by staff and the Park and Recreation Advisory Board to be considered and adopted by the Bryan City Council.

The administrative offices of the Parks and Recreation Department are currently located at 1309 East MLK Blvd. in Bryan. This location was obtained in May, 2003, with the structure being moved from the downtown site.

The Bryan Parks and Recreation Department is proud of its leadership in preserving park land and creating recreational opportunities for all the people of Brazos County and incoming visitors to Bryan. The parks function with a sensitivity toward preserving our natural beauties for future generations.

Our Vision: *Bryan Parks and Recreation -- Growing with You!*

As we delve into the history of Bryan Parks and Recreation, take a stroll through time as we establish a chronology of events and acquisitions that built the Bryan Parks and Recreation system into what it is today.

PAGES FROM THE PAST - a chronology

The City of Bryan was incorporated in 1871, becoming an official entity of Brazos County which was established in 1841.

1868, June 13 - The **Bryan City Cemetery** was established with the purchase of 20 acres of land for \$100 from J.C. Hubert, in what was then the northern outskirts of the City of Bryan. Keeping pace with the growth of Bryan, additional acreage has been purchased from time to time until at present the original tract has increased to 48 acres, all enclosed in cyclone and wrought iron fencing. In 1945, Mr. D. Mike donated 1.08 acres which provided complete frontage on Texas Avenue. This, with the original tract, seemed adequate for our cemetery needs for many years ahead. However, looking still further into the future, the City purchased an additional 18.5 acres from the American Legion Post 159. 9.807 acres of this property was purchased for \$10 through George E. Kristynik, Commander and its Adjutant, James F. Aldredge. In 1991 the design and plat of this expansion area was completed and is ready for implementation as more land is needed.

In 1947 a space was set aside for the low-cost burial of infants under five years of age. This was appropriately named Babyland. The original tract of 250 infant grave spaces has been exhausted, but another of similar size behind the monument is in use and additional plots will be opened as needed. The \$50,000 Myrtie Astin Memorial Chapel was donated by the late E.H. Astin in memory of his wife in 1950.

On December 12, 1975, the Cemetery came under the operation of the Director of Parks and Recreation. In 1980, it was maintained by a 5-man crew and encompassed 48 acres. The Cemetery Association was organized in 1920 by the Bryan Chamber of Commerce, which saw the need of additional beautification over and above the regular maintenance provided by the city. Its first president was George A. Adams, who was president for 10 years. The Association, made up of lot owners and governed by an executive board of twenty dedicated citizens meeting quarterly, formulates the plans for its beautification and acts in a liaison capacity to city staff. On July 2, 1990 the City Council authorized \$2,000 for a contract

with Garrett Engineering for the platting and master plan for a 2.5 acre area of the City Cemetery for use as the Cemetery Mausoleum Section Plat. The funds were donated by Don Adam. Buchanan/Soil Mechanics, Inc. provided engineering and surveying services for the project. On Aug. 22, 1995 the City Council authorized the purchase of additional property for Oakwood Cemetery. The cemetery is under the supervision of the City Sexton. Currently, the grounds are groomed by four full time employees.

1890's, **Oak Grove Park** was granted to the City of Bryan by the Oak Grove Addition developer for use as a city park. A declaration contained in the records of Brazos County Courthouse dated October 22, 1913 shows a map with a park platted in as a portion of Oak Grove Addition to the City of Bryan. Now renamed **Claude Scurry Park**, this 7 acre neighborhood park is located between Wellington Street and the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks. It is the oldest park in Bryan.

1910, A building was erected to be used as the first **Bryan Colored High School**; it burned in 1931. The first Kemp High School was built in its place; it also burned in 1970. The name was changed to Neal Junior High School in 1961 when a new Kemp High School was built next to this building. A day care center was operated in the building in 1988. This building was lowered in 1996 to make room for the new Neal Elementary School.

1911, March 14 - Two acres of land purchased at the corner of Randolph and 21st St. from E. and Emma Griesser for \$300. This was the site of the first disposal plant for the city. It later became Williams Park which was renamed Neal Park in 1996, in honor of R.C. Neal, Principal of the first Neal School.

1920, April 6 - Bryan Country Club (**Municipal Golf Course**) is the oldest recreational facility in Bryan. The building committee was headed by Travis B. Bryan. Originally it was a 9-hole course on 125 acres. Henry Ranson winner of the U.S. Open was the most famous player to play on these greens. It cost \$7.50 per 30 minutes of play. In 1988 \$55,346 in Oil and Gas Funds were allocated for a new gold course pro shop and a covered cart storage area.

1925, June 12 - **Sue Haswell Park**, which contained nine and one half acres, was donated to the City by Mr. Tyler Haswell, Mayor of Bryan from 1921 until 1927. Mr. Haswell, perhaps fearing that commercial interests would someday encroach upon this property, placed certain restrictions on the City of Bryan in return for the donation. He gave this land with the stipulation that the acreage be used as a City Park for the citizens of Bryan. Mr. Haswell also stipulated that the park be named "The Sue Haswell Memorial Park" in memory of his deceased mother. Commercial enterprise in the park was also prohibited by deed restrictions. Because the City was unable to sell cokes or other concessions in the park an additional ten acres were purchased in 1946 to facilitate concession sales. In 1957 a pool with a bath house was incorporated into the park structure. The deed restrictions also came into question in 1972 when the Planning Commission of Bryan sought to extend FM Road 158 past Sue Haswell Park. Because the deed restricted the land to park purposes only, the extension could not be made. If the City had chosen to make the extension, the deed restrictions would have been violated and the park property would have reverted back to the heirs of the estate of Mr. Haswell. Alternative routes proved too costly so the project was abandoned. In 1978, a project was conducted by the Texas A&M University Parks and Recreation 209 class to develop the plans and installation of playground equipment into the park infrastructure. This park now consists of tennis courts, pool, restrooms, picnic units, horse show pits, play equipment, footbridges, and the building being used as the Haswell Shop housing the management and maintenance crews for Haswell Park and other parks within the system. 1987 saw park bond funds (\$470,428) used to make major improvements which included the concrete parking lot next to the pool and adjacent to the pavilion, build the picnic pavilion with kitchen and restrooms, lighting, tennis courts, sand volleyball court, basketball court, playground, bandstand, concrete trail, foot bridge and landscaping.

1935, BISD purchased eleven lots from Mr. J.W. Batts and Mr. M.G. Nall. Two years later an additional two lots were purchased from Mr. and Mrs. E. Randall. This was the site of the old San Jacinto School or Ybarra School. It was converted to a park in 1968-69 and currently maintained by BISD.

1937, Municipal Pool was built at the old water reservoir for Bryan, with a bath house.

1939, **Bryan Municipal Golf Course** enlarged to 18 holes - 141 acres.

Williamson Park (excess from Golf Course expansion) was built on 10 acres at "Country Club Lake" with two tennis courts, basketball court, two pavilions, restrooms, and playground. A Girl Scout Building was built on former park property.

1943, December 10 - The **L.K. Williams Memorial Park** was dedicated. This park is a one block area at the intersection of 21st Street and Randolph Street. It is the only one of two remaining park areas in the original 640 acre plat of the City of Bryan. The L.K. Williams Memorial Park Board was created for its management. This Board, composed of members of the black community, supplemented the already existing Parks and Recreation Committee which was composed of white members. In September, 1985 Community Development Block Grant monies provided for the renovation of the restrooms, additional playground equipment, and concrete sidewalks. The park was renamed to **Neal Park** in May, 1996 to more appropriately compliment the planned adjoining elementary school. Construction is planned for 1998 with a proposed grant from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. A joint use agreement with BISD will benefit the City of Bryan as well as a multi-cultural dimension of a new elementary school and adjoining recreation center/gymnasium.

December 31 - Mr. W.J. Coulter donated a 20'x150' lot to the City of Bryan. It was stipulated that the lot be used as a city park. A small marble tablet was to be placed on the land with Mr. Coulter's name on it. It also must be maintained in good condition. It is to be known as the **Coulter Triangle**. The A&M Garden Club developed and maintained the landscaped area until 1959 when the Parks and Recreation Department took responsibility for maintenance of the park. The care of this area has been adopted by various groups throughout the years.

1946, July 12 - "**Poor Farm**" land accepted with reservation by the City Council (now **Sadie Thomas Park**).

1948, June 25 - The entire tract located at the end of Emmett Street was conveyed through a resolution adopted by the City Commission of the City of Bryan (Mayor Roy M. Vick and Noah W. Dansby, City Secretary) to the National Guard. This acreage was part of the original tract owned by F.W. Yeager. On September 27, 1958 8.09 acres were recorded and conveyed back to the City for the sum of \$10. The remaining National Guard property area was developed to include what is now known as **Bob Bond Park**.

1950's, The Department of Parks, Playgrounds, Health, and Sanitation under the direction of Mr. R.B. Cowart had an annual budget around \$12,000 and five employees. During this time the department had responsibility for Sue Haswell, Oak Grove, Williamson, and Thomas Parks.

1950, January 20 - The City Council approved placement of markers in Sue Haswell Memorial Park at a cost of \$225 and in Coulter Triangle at a cost of \$196.00.

The City implemented summer playground programs at the various Bryan elementary schools, but the full coordination of school facilities and city parks ("school-city park concept") was accepted by City Council until July 14, 1964. Under this plan the city installed playground equipment, picnic tables and pools in areas with large density of school-aged children. Facilities were also available to the general public. The department provided the supervisory personnel for the Summer Recreation Programs.

1956, *Bryan Daily Eagle* Headline

**City Recreation
Opens
Full Blast**

The article reported the opening of playground programs at Crockett, Bowie, and Ben Milam Elementary Schools for white children and at Washington and Kemp Schools for black children.

1956, Twenty-seven acres purchased for \$62,000 by the city for **Travis Park**. The 27 acres contain the Little League North fields. Soccer fields, covered bleachers are located at Big Travis, restrooms, and concession stand are at both fields. These fields were the original home of the Bryan-College Station Bombers, sometimes called Cardinals, a semi-professional baseball team. Now the field is used by the Bryan High School baseball team as well as seasonal play by local men's teams. In September, 1985 Community Development Funds were used to replace the bleachers, flag pole, change the parking lot traffic flow, replace the dug outs, concession stand, press box, replace roofing, replace infield and re-seed, automated sprinkler system, replace scoreboards, and fencing.

June - Youth Recreation Program initiated under the directorship of Mr. and Mrs. C.H. Godfrey, on the upper floor of the original **Bryan Municipal Golf Course** Country Club building [2 pool tables, table tennis, music, snacks].

1957, In February, 1957 the Department of Parks and Recreation, under the direction of Jack Ashworth, was formally separated from the Health and Sanitation Department. Initially, the Department had a staff of two full-time and 29 part-time employees and was responsible for approximately four general use parks, the municipal golf course, and the baseball park.

Until 1957, the management and maintenance of the parks facilities in Bryan was handled by the then Department of Parks, Playgrounds, Health and Sanitation.

City purchased 23 additional lots to add to the Poor Farm to form the **Eastside Addition Park** - 15 acres at Martin Luther King and Moss Streets. Pool added, softball, basketball court, wading pool, tennis court, soccer field, two pavilions (one with kitchen added in 1993), ten picnic tables, and restrooms.

1958, April 25 - The Bryan Women's Club appeared before the City Council to discuss the preservation of **City Hall Park**. This grassy areas was across the street from the old city hall where the Bryan Public Library now stands. The women were concerned that increased business would destroy natural settings within the city limits. The proposal was approved by the City Commission, but 10 years later (1968) the park was taken for construction of the new city library.

1959, **Eastside Addition Park** renamed to **Sadie E. Thomas Memorial Park** - A Texas State Historical Commission marker commemorates the long years of service Mrs. Thomas gave to the recreation needs of the black community in Bryan.

1960, City of Bryan population was 27,542.

April 6 - Land was purchased from several owners for **F.L. Henderson Park**. Development of the 21.8 acres at Mockingbird and Palasota Streets began on December 1, 1960 with two basketball courts, restrooms, a concession stand at the Nowak Little League Fields, a pavilion, twelve picnic units, and a playscape. The pool was completed in 1976 with federal matching funds from the Bureau of Outdoor Education. The pools were emptied in 1986 because of low usage and structural problems deemed prohibitive to repair.

The Parks and Recreation Board was created as a citizens advisory board to determine recreational policies for Bryan.

November 19 - Land was purchased for **Tanglewood Park** - 19.2 acres for \$10.00 from Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Ogg. This park is located on Carter Creek Parkway and includes tennis courts, soccer fields, sand volleyball pit, play areas, pavilion, picnic sites with barbeque pits, restrooms, and parking.

September 10 - Land was purchased for **Sul Ross Park**. 18 acres were acquired from Mr. and Mrs. Joe Luza for \$10.00 and developed in 1960-61. This park was named for Sul Ross School. The Luza's were among the City of Bryan's earliest residents. The land on which the park sets today is a portion of a 550 acre tract bought from Colonel Harvey Mitchell for about \$4,000.

1961, City of Bryan passed a \$220,000 general obligation bond for park improvements.

1962, A landmark recreational measure was passed by the U.S. Congress in the form of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act. This act provides matched fund grants-in-aid to the states and their political subdivisions for planning,

acquiring, and developing outdoor recreation areas.

When the Parks Department acquired additional facilities of its own, it often located them near schools.

1964, July 14 - Coordination was developed between the BISD schools and parks "school-city park" concept.

1965, April 27 - The City Commissioners passed an emergency ordinance amending the City Code by changing the number of members of the Park Board from 7 to 9. On May 21 the first meeting of the Parks and Recreation Board (vice committee) considered the purchase of land near Bonham School for a park area.

Bryan's population was at around 30,000. The City had developed or had land to develop some 106.5 acres.

1966, January 26 - **Burton Creek Park** - 17 acres purchased from Mr. J.C. Culpepper for \$46,480 by the Bryan School system. Henderson school now occupies 10 acres of the site.

July 5 - **Bonham Park** land purchased to provide park facilities at the north end of the city, near the Bonham Elementary School. Discussions had begun in 1965 between the School Board and Recreation Advisory Board (they approved on September 16). City Manager Fred Sandlin reported the City's approval. Purchase was concluded on July 5 of 11.403 acres for 11,403. It was originally developed with a wading pool with 11.4 acres at Russell and Montana (donated by the Noon Lions Club of Bryan). The wading pool was later closed. The park includes two tennis courts, basketball court, five picnic sites, two soccer fields, a jogging trail, and footbridge.

1967, Site study began on Bryan Utility Cooling Lake. It was decided by city planners not only to use the water from the lake to cool the condensers of the Roland Dansby Power Plant but also to convert the lake into a recreational facility.

1968, **City Hall Park** was taken for construction of the City Library.

Burton Creek Park was developed adjacent to Henderson School with five picnic sites, play equipment, and basketball court. This park later reverted back to the Bryan Independent School District.

Garden Acres - 1 acre - acquired when Garden Acres subdivision was plotted. It surrounds a family cemetery begun in the 19th century.

Crescent Park was acquired when North Oakwood Addition was platted - 1.5 acres with backstop. This neighborhood park is known for its wild flowers, and is mostly used as passive space.

San Jacinto Park, a 1.2 acre plot of the former San Jacinto School "Ybarra School" site, was offered by the Bryan Independent School District to the Parks and Recreation Board on May 8, 1968. The Board accepted the offer and the department began development of the site on January 23, 1969 with a backstop, picnic area, basketball court, and playground equipment. The park was dedicated on August 11, 1969. A new tot lot and improved lighting was added in 1996.

1970, When the Parks and Recreation Department entered the 70's the employees numbered 13 full-time including a director, a foreman, a secretary, and 10 full-time laborers. There were 11 playground parks of 382 acres, a public golf course, and three swimming pools. The department budget was \$107,053.

Dr. Gary Halter and Jim St. John, sailboat enthusiasts constructed a sailboat storage facility on Municipal Lake in conjunction with the Texas A&M Sailing Club.

January 26 - Mr. J.S. Walker of the Bryan Kiwanis Club appeared before the Parks and Recreation Board and suggested improvements to Finfeather and Municipal Lakes. The desire was there for more water-oriented activity.

1971, **Washington Park** was a one acre tract at Martin Luther King and 20th Street on the site of the burned Washington School (September, 1970). It was converted to park use in 1971 after recommendation by the Parks Board to the

City Commission on February 4, 1971. **Washington Park** was developed with a basketball court and restrooms. Improved lighting and play equipment were added in 1994. This is also the site of a pre-school Head Start facility which is separated from the park by a fence.

Federal funds were received for construction of double light tennis courts at **Tanglewood Park**.

1972, Recreation superintendent position created. Mr. Roy G. Ross filled this position.

January - The design proposal and subsequent deepening of the lake bed of Municipal Lake was accomplished to permit more water-oriented activity such as fishing, sail boating, and picnicking. A spillway was also constructed to regulate water flow out of the lake.

1973, Federal funds were received for construction of Henderson pool.

1974, Jay Williams, Director of Bryan Parks and Recreation Department succeeded Jack Ashworth.

1975, Bryan Utilities Lake Park (**Lake Bryan Park**) was constructed with the aid of federal funds. The first phase of clearing vegetation around the Bryan Utility Cooling Lake was begun. Private enterprise was responsible for taking the fees for park entry and use.

Before 1978 the Parks and Recreation Department was located at 2200 Fountain Street with the Sanitation and Street Departments.

1978, December - The Parks and Recreation Department obtained a new office. An old lumber warehouse previously leased by the Bryan Schools System at 203 East 29th Street was the new site (now known as 201 East 29th Street).

The Parks Department installed post and cable in **Coulter Triangle** for traffic control. Further developments included construction of a concrete curb for a flower bed and the planting of shrubs.

The TAMU RP209 Class [Park Maintenance and Operations Lab] with instructor John V. Blackburn "a nuts and bolts man", constructed playground equipment. Some of the equipment consisted of tires and telephone poles obtained at no cost, and other supplies were purchased by the elementary schools. The class donated the labor and provided the needed tools. Two of the projects involved a tire tree and a tire raft.

1979, Summer - 70 full and part-time employees kept programs of softball, swimming, golf, tennis, and playgrounds operating. Other youth programs included open gym at Kemp and supervised playgrounds at Williams and San Jacinto Parks.

Castle Heights Park with 6.4 acres located at Hooper and Tisdale Streets was obtained by the City. It was dedicated in 1980 with a basketball court, wading pool, trail, footbridge, five picnic sites, and restrooms. The wading pool was later closed. In 1985, through the use of Community Development Funds, drainage improvements to the creek, additional playground equipment, lighting for the basketball court, and concrete sidewalks were accomplished. Electrical additions and construction of playground equipment were added in 1994.

1980, Kenneth Wolman, Parks Superintendent.

Lake Bryan Park (formerly Bryan Utilities Lake Park) is located about five miles northwest of downtown Bryan on Sandy Point Road (FM1687). The complete site consists of some 1,060 acres of land and cooling reservoir for a gas generated electric plant. The reservoir is divided by an island into two distinct bodies of water. The existing open park area occupies the south portion of this island. Access is across a bridge from the south side of the site. Existing facilities include a boat ramp and parking lot on the peninsula leading to the island, picnic areas, one pavilion, and restroom structure with outdoor shower. A small maintenance structure also exists. The park is served by a network of paved roads. Designated parking areas are located throughout the park. Tent and recreational vehicle camping are available by permit. Park rules and city

ordinances are enforced by the Lake Officers. This Certified Officer Program was implemented in 1994. A Reserve Officer force was added in 1997 with up to six individuals serving as an additional security force during peak use times in the park.

The department has fourteen parks to maintain, 18 full-time employees and a budget averaging \$370,000.

1982, Bryan Aquatic Center with 3 acres was developed with a 50 meter swimming pool and diving well, wading pool, super slide, and bath house offices, parking lot, lighting, fencing, concession area, and storage areas. Funding sources totaling \$1,265,587 were from BISD, Texas Parks and Wildlife, and the City of Bryan park bond funds. This facility was dedicated in 1985.

1984, Jack Gordon was Division Manager of the Parks and Recreation Department, Roy Ross was the Recreation Coordinator, Clay Carballo, Athletic Coordinator, Alvin Walker, Lake Bryan Officer, and Monique Dekker was Special Events Coordinator.

Bond Funds passed for several Parks and Recreation facilities including the **Bryan Regional Athletic Complex**.

1985, The **Nina Heard Astin Recreation Area** has 12 acres of ground at Rountree and South College Avenue. This recreational area is adjacent to Country Club Lake. The lake was drained in 1976 and again in August 1992. An aerator fountain was added in September, 1992 and subsequently removed in 1994. In 1985 funds totaling \$312,725 from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department and the Astin Foundation with City of Bryan park bonds and Oil and Gas funds provided for the landscaping, pavilion, bar-b-que pit, parking lot, restrooms, walking/jogging trail, gazebo, pier and sidewalks.

Nina Heard was born Jan. 17, 1888, in McKinney, second daughter of John Spencer Heard and Rachel Wilson Heard. She attended Mary Baldwin College with a degree in music. She moved to Bryan in 1910 after marrying Roger Q. Astin, owner of Rivermist, a 1,000-acre cotton plantation in the Brazos Bottom near Mumford. One of six sons and a daughter born to John E. Astin, John E. Astin died in 1918, his widow paid for construction of St. Andrews Episcopal Church in downtown Bryan.

Sadie Thomas Park gained capital improvements through the Community Development Funds for lighting improvements of the basketball court and concrete sidewalks. These improvements were completed in September, 1989.

The **Bryan Regional Athletic Complex** with 89.5 acres at N. Texas Avenue and Highway 6 was purchased. In 1987 Park Bond Funds were used to develop the four field softball complex, parking lot, lighting, landscaping, maintenance building, concession stand and restrooms, playground, and flag poles in Phase I.

Copperfield Park was acquired with 5.9 acres, and dedicated on November 18, 1990. This park is a neighborhood park adjacent to Sam Houston Elementary School with playground, sand volleyball court, tennis court, picnic tables, barbeque pits, and pavilion. This parkland purchase was allocated with 1984 Bond Funds.

Henderson Park improvements were accomplished through the use of Community Development Funds included asphalt for the gravel parking lot adjacent to the Little League fields, including curb and gutter, and installing lights for the lot; concrete sidewalks from the parking lot to the fields; concrete pads for the ball field bleachers, and landscaping.

1986, An archeological survey of the proposed **Bryan Regional Athletic Complex** was conducted by the Archeological Research Laboratory, Texas A&M University. A pedestrian survey and shovel testing of a 60 acre tract resulted in the recording of one historic site producing artifacts dating to the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Construction was initiated on the 87 acres located near the

intersection of North Texas Avenue and Highway 6. The first phase included four lighted softball fields, a large concession stand and restrooms, playscape area, parking, and maintenance support building. Development has included soccer fields, tennis courts, trails and passive use areas, parking volleyball courts, and an additional pavilion with concession area, playscape, volleyball area, basketball court, and soccer fields. Two Little League fields have been constructed at the rear of the site. Funding for this project included 1984 Bond Funds, grant monies from Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, and the Bryan Soccer Club donation. The completion date was September 30, 1989.

September 10 - Bryan City Council approved the renaming of the baseball fields at the **Bryan Regional Athletic Complex** to the Larry Alan Parker Fields. Larry Alan Parker, former Texas ASA District 30 Commissioner, passed away after an accident on the Brazos River. Parker worked diligently to bring events such as ASA tournaments to Bryan/College Station. A Bryan High School scholarship was established to benefit future seniors with opportunities for higher education.

Westwood Estates Park with 10.56 acres (2 parcels) was added to the park inventory. This neighborhood park is located in Westwood Estates subdivision and undeveloped.

1987, July 28 - **Noon Lions Park** with a one acre creek bed and overflow area was acquired when Lynndale Acres was platted on Still Creek and McHaney Drive. Play equipment was donated by the Noon Lions Club along with two picnic tables, and footbridge. From July 28, 1987 until July 28, 1992 a lease for a small building in the **Lion's Park** section was approved under the mayorship of Marvin Tate, and approved by City Attorney, Robert D. Andron. The Brazos Valley Model Railroad Society was the lessee for their club house. At this time the society president was Fred Holland. The term of the lease was for five years. The lease was re-approved on August 11, 1992. This area was never officially dedicated or recognized as a City park.

1988, A master plan for **Sadie Thomas Park** was funded and developed through Community Development Funds.

1989, Cooperative efforts of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, BISD, and funds from the City of Bryan Oil and Gas Funds were used to develop **Jane Long School Park** adjacent to the newly constructed Jane Long Middle School. The facility includes a walking/jogging trail with exercise stations, two softball/baseball practice areas, two football/soccer field areas, lighted tennis courts, covered lighted basketball/multi use court, picnic sites, and a concrete parking lot.

1990, *Marco A. Cisneros*, Director, Bryan Parks and Recreation Department

January 26 - 18 flood lights were ordered and installed for lamping the Bonham Little League fields at **Bryan Regional Athletic Complex**.

Copperfield Park was developed by contract with JHW General Contractors through the Oil and Gas Fund.

February - Renovations were done to the Bryan Parks and Recreation administrative office at 201 E. 29th Street after the structure was moved from the Police Department property.

The City Council meeting of February 12, 1990 approved monies for two playscape structures at **Bonham Park**.

April 18 - Post-completion inspection of **Astin Park** by the Grant-in-Aide Branch of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

November - Mr. Brad Smith, Operations Supervisor, developed a park maintenance plan including 21 parks totaling 150.6 acres.

Copperfield Park was dedicated on November 18.

Playscape structure from Persenaire Park & Playground Products was installed at the **Bryan Regional Athletic Complex**. Combination soccer/football posts were also installed at the **Bryan Regional Athletic Complex**.

Development of the **Sam Rayburn School Park** adjacent to the new Sam Rayburn

Middle School was begun. Cooperative funds came from BISD, Texas Parks and Wildlife, and the City of Bryan Oil and Gas Funds. These funds allowed for the walking/jogging trail with exercise stations, two softball/baseball practice areas, two football/soccer fields, lighted tennis courts, covered lighted, basketball/multi use court, picnic sites, and concrete parking lot.

1991, April 17 - Discussions were begun concerning a new program -Holiday Lights on the Lake Program at **Astin Park**.

June 20 - resurfacing program approved for the tennis courts at **Castle Heights Park** to be restructured to two courts.

September 10 - Bryan City Council approved the renaming of the baseball fields at the **Bryan Regional Athletic Complex** to the Larry Alan Parker Fields. Larry Alan Parker, former Texas ASA District 30 Commissioner, passed away after an accident on the Brazos River. Parker worked diligently to bring events such as ASA tournaments to Bryan/College Station. A Bryan High School scholarship was established to benefit future seniors with opportunities for higher education.

1992, April 30 - Curb construction and playground bidding was done for **Bonham Park**. Oil and Gas Funds were allocated.

April 15 - A funding request for the Holiday on the Lake Program at **Astin Park** went to the Nina Heard Astin Foundation.

June 9 - Approval of the grant was received from the Astin Foundation Board to fund the Holiday on the Lake Program at **Astin Park**.

1992-1993, The department employed 30 full time personnel at a cost of \$984,288; maintained three cemeteries, three swimming pools with 80,573 participants and 12 pavilions with a total occupancy of 22,878 citizens. 17 athletic fields and 68 recreational areas including the basketball and tennis court facilities were also maintained. During the 1992-93 fiscal year 50 recreational or special events were conducted by the Bryan Parks and Recreation Department.

1993, June 1 - Citizens for Historic Preservation, Inc. a Texas Non-Profit Corporation d/b/a Brazos Heritage Society granted by Warranty Deed the area now known as **Heritage Park**. Randy Merrill, President, and Susan Trussell, Secretary then officers of the Heritage Society. This property was originally owned by Edith and Ethel Cavitt and conveyed to the Citizens for Historic Preservation in 1981. The gazebo in the middle of the park shall always be named the Matthew Winsper Nobel Memorial Gazebo. Conveyance to the city was subject to certain limitations that included that the property be forever used as a city park, and maintained primarily as a passive green space. The city must maintain the architectural and environmental integrity of the park. The Brazos Heritage Society and successors have the right to use the park without charge.

June 8 - The Bryan City Council approved the gift deed of 5.015 acres of **Camelot Park** to the City of Bryan from John Austin for \$1.00.

June 15, Frank Thurmund donated the land for a park. The original deed was dated December 27, 1977. **Camelot Park** consists of 16.3 acres with a 1/2 mile walking trail meant to help visitors understand the relationship among all parts of the environment. There are five interpretive stops along the trail. They are marked by numbered posts. The trail is uneven and may cause difficulties for some people. Heavy rains sometimes causes the creek to flood. A small bridge crosses the trail.

Brazos Valley Research Associates were retained by the City of Bryan to conduct a cultural resources survey of the site of the proposed **Tiffany Park**. Funding was provided in part from a grant from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. The park site surrounds a 7.465 acre tract that is the site of a proposed elementary school. The area is adjacent to Hudson Creek.

September 30- Department of Antiquities Protection approved the recommendation from Mr. Moore's draft report that the **Tiffany Park** site (12.536 acre) development project could proceed relative to State Antiquities Code (Permit Number 1293). If archeological deposits were found during construction they needed to be reported.

1993 - 1994, The department employed 23 full time individuals, and part

time labor at a cost of \$963,560; three pools with 82,000 participants, and 13 pavilions with a total occupancy of 29,500 citizens. 17 athletic fields and 73 recreational areas were maintained. During the 1993-84 fiscal year 54 recreational or special events were conducted by the Bryan Parks and Recreation Department.

1994 - 1995, The department employed 23 full time individuals, and part time labor at a cost of \$1,043,022; three pools with 82,000 participants and 13 pavilions with a total occupancy of 30,000 citizens. 17 athletic fields and 73 recreational areas were maintained.

1995, June - The Bryan Soccer Club paid for resurfacing of the soccer fields 4,5, and 6 at the **Bryan Regional Athletic Complex** for \$1,950.

Tiffany Park was developed with a picnic pavilion, picnic tables, barbecue pits, backstop, exercise station, soccer goals, tennis court, playscapes, horseshoes, amphitheater, basketball pavilion, and interactive water fountain.

1996, May 23 - **Williams Park** was renamed to Neal Park in memory of former BISD principal Mr. R.C. Neal.

July - A Texas Parks and Wildlife Grant application was developed and submitted for the construction of the **Neal Recreation Center and Gymnasium** to be located adjacent to the Neal Elementary School being built on Randolph Street, the site of the previous Neal Elementary School. The blocks for the construction of recreation center and subsequent park were originally donated by C.C. Parsons, May 23, 1929, for school purposes for the colored children of Bryan for at least five years. More property originally owned by Grady Terry, Robert I. Jones, W.J. Bullock, Dr. Mae Cole Emory, Mrs. Nanie Cole, F.M. Hall, Herbert Benjamin Franklin, Daniel Russell, Walker and Louise Watson, and John Boriskie were purchased by the City of Bryan and BISD for the site improvements. Approval of the grant of \$500,00 from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department was matched by the City of Bryan and the Bryan Independent School District.

A 7.4 mile mountain bike trail was developed at **Lake Bryan** in association with the

Brazos Valley Mountain Bike Association.

1997, June - The bids were approved to begin construction of Bryan's first recreation center - **Neal Recreation Center.**

1998, The Neal Recreation Center opened for business in August of 1998.

1999, May - David Schmitz, new Parks and Recreation Division Manager

2000, January - Villa West Park is completed (10 acres) located next to Mary Branch Elementary School

May - additional lighting at Bryan Regional Athletic Complex is installed

August - major drainage renovations are completed at the Bryan Regional Athletic Complex Softball parking lot.

2001, April - Austin's Colony Park is completed (32 acres) located adjacent to Mitchell Elementary School

May - dedication of "Memoire" sculpture at Heritage Park on Mother's Day

2002, Parks and Recreation Department moved directly under Deputy City Manager

June - Lake Bryan operations are transferred to BTU, who in turn contracts out management services

Palace Theater operations are transferred to Parks and Recreation Department from Planning Department.

Right of Ways Division is transferred to Parks and Recreation Department

Code Enforcement mowing is transferred to Parks and Recreation Department

August - Tanglewood Park renovations are completed (soccer side)

Haswell Park "Path of Presidents" major renovations are completed.

October - outsourcing of Parks grounds maintenance begins ; all Parks are mowed under contract ; Lay-off of 8 grounds workers, the Parks Superintendent

Lay-off of Special Events and Marketing position

2003, Cherry Park is completed (4 acres) located adjacent to Johnson Elementary School

A skateboard Park is installed at Williamson Park

Completion of additional restrooms at Haswell and Tanglewood Parks

Parks and Recreation Department is combined with Facility and Fleet Services

Parks custodial responsibilities are outsourced (contract)

2004, February - Construction begins on \$3.5 million, 30 acre expansion of Henderson Park to include 4 baseball fields, 5 soccer fields, a swimming pool, covered sports pavilion, sand volleyball, picnic pavilion, 10 picnic pads, a 1/2 mile walking/nature trail, 5 acres of greenspace, and a skateboard Park.

July - a pocket park is developed in the Shirewood IV & V subdivision

Right of Ways mowing is outsourced (contract).

July - environmental and archeological survey is complete on the property for the Turkey Creek Trail Project. The trail will follow Turkey Creek from FM2818 to Villa Maria Ave.